

## EXPANDING COMMUNITY COLLABORATIONS IN THE FAITH COMMUNITIES

By Keren Goldberg



Monday, September 10, 2012, marked another milestone in the department's initiatives in the area of mental health and spirituality. Approximately 300 members of the diverse faith communities attended the innovative training "Understanding the Impact of Addiction & Supporting Recovery: Strategies and Tools for Congregational and Other Faith Leaders," chaired by Adrienne Hament of the Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health (LACDMH) Community and Government Relations Division. The clergy training was funded by the Substance Abuse & Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) under the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, for the Clergy Education and Training Project of the National Association for Children of Alcoholics (NACoA).



The opportunity to hold this training, which has been conducted in several states, inspired collaboration between LACDMH and Los Angeles County Department of

Public Health Substance Abuse Prevention and Control (SAPC). Dr. Southard, LACDMH Director, and John Viernes, Director of SAPC, welcomed attendees and distinguished presenters to the day long program. It was held in the comfortable facilities of the community center of the Cathedral of Our Lady of the Angels in downtown Los Angeles. This event, which allowed for a free registration, included a complimentary breakfast and lunch. The venue was supported by Mental Health Services Act (MHSA) funding.



The program was full of invaluable information and ideas for best practices and evidence-based approaches. It was an example of the great interest in creating a more integrated approach to mental health and substance addiction services. Participants walked away with an increased awareness of how addiction to alcohol and other drugs impact individuals and their families, and a role and strategies for clergy and congregations in promoting hope, wellness and recovery.